

11th CSPCWG-1st NCWG MEETING
Rostock, Germany 27-30 April 2015

Paper for Consideration by NCWG

2001 UNESCO Convention – Protection of wrecks

Submitted by:	UK
Executive Summary:	Tens of thousands of sailors and merchant navy personnel lost their lives in World War One but now the huge number of ships sunk in the conflict are to be offered increased protection under a UN agreement. What are the charting considerations
Related Documents:	UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage
Related Projects:	None

Introduction / Background.

The many ships sunk in World War One (WW1) are to be offered increased protection under a UN agreement. The locations of many of the wrecks are known and have proved popular with recreational divers and also with commercial salvage companies. The issue of dismemberment for salvage has become a major problem, especially as the price of metals has increased in recent years. For example, in 2011 the remains of three British cruisers sunk in 1914 were dismantled for the copper and bronze they contained.

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage will increase safeguards. Introduced in 2001, the convention only applies to ships sunk at least 100 years ago. However, many WW1 wrecks are now, or soon will be, 100 years old; they therefore come within the scope of the agreement. It makes a real legal difference: It prevents pillaging, which is happening on a very large scale; it prevents commercial exploitation, scrap metal recovery and it will have regulations on incidental impacts, such as the problem of trawlers going over World War One sites.

Analysis / Discussion.

It is not clear how States are supposed to protect these wrecks. Within UK's waters and that of other Members (particularly in Europe) there are huge numbers of WW1 wrecks. It does not seem realistic to review all wrecks to discover if they are 100 years old and then mark them on charts in such a way as to protect them from exploitation (for example, marking all as 'historic wrecks') and possibly adding a note or (on large scale charts) a restricted area.

UK would like to know whether other members have considered this convention and what they are planning to do.

Conclusions.

None

Recommendations.

None

Justification and Impacts.

Compliance with the UNESCO convention and protection of WW1 wrecks from

exploitation. But, because of the overstretch of resources and potential additional non-navigational clutter on charts, it is not obvious how this can be achieved.

Action required of NCWG.

The NCWG is invited to consider how WW1 wrecks should be charted in order to protect them from exploitation.